

AN OVERVIEW OF POPULAR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT) QUALIFICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study hypothesizes that the qualification of an ELT practitioner considerably impacts the learning outcome of learners in learning or mastering the English language. Supporting the stated hypothesis, this short communication, an excerpt of my earlier findings (Jha, 2014), aims at presenting a compact overview of six most sought-after ELT qualifications for the prospective ELT practitioners. Employing document analysis as a means of data collection, the study delved into exploring the implications of six ELT qualifications at face value only. The findings revealed six popular postgraduate ELT qualifications that are in great demand in ELT industry. They are Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Teaching English as an Additional Language (TEAL), English Language Teaching (ELT), and Applied Linguistics and TESOL (ALTESOL).

KEYWORDS: English Teaching, ELT Qualifications & ELT Industry

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INTRODUCTION

Today, ELT practitioners are in great demand in both native and non-native countries. However, according to Braine (2010) currently, eighty percent of English teachers are those who worldwide are not native speakers of the language. Nonetheless, English language teachers in non-native countries are way away in becoming licentiate to teach the English language for lack of ideal ELT qualifications. Partly because of unawareness of ideal ELT qualifications and partly because of inaccessibility to the ideal ELT programmes, prospective ELT practitioners remain deprived of undergoing ideal ELT programmes and in turn qualifications. For instance, in a country like Ethiopia, ELT practitioners teach only what they know, what they have, what they think, and what they believe (Mijena, 2012). His concern is very pertinent to most of the non-native countries which can only be minimized by maximizing the quality of ELT practitioners with ideal ELT qualifications. There is a worldwide belief in academia: “*We teach what we were taught.*” In most of the non-native countries, qualification requirements vary considerably among employers. In many cases, one is allowed to teach even without certificates like CELTA, DELTA, etc. One the one hand, it becomes obligatory for an English teacher to be a native speaker along with having qualifications in MA (TESOL and/or Applied Linguistics); on the other hand, having an MA (English language and/or literature) qualification becomes valuable. There are cases where some institutions accept proficiency certificates like IELTS, TOEFL CAE, TOEIC, BEC, etc. to teach the English language. Sometimes, an ESL institution considers highest qualification plus B. Ed a basic teaching qualification for ELT. In rare cases, there are no hard and fast eligibility criteria at all and employers recruit even mediocre aspiring ELT practitioners. Thus, qualification criteria differ from institution to institution, state to state, and

country to country.

Findings

Regardless of the preference of ELT qualifications in non-native countries, this short communication gives a quick overview of six most sought-after ELT qualifications below as excerpted from Jha (2014).

- **Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)**

TEFL is an ELT qualification which is aimed at transforming aspiring ELT practitioners to becoming trained ELT practitioners so that they could teach not only in local but also in global ESL scenarios. The universities, which are known for imparting this ELT programme at postgraduate-level, are the University of Birmingham, The University of Edinburgh, Lancaster University, and many more.

- **Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)**

TESL is emerging as one of the most preferred ELT qualification programs, especially in the USA. The implication of using *second language*, not *foreign language* is to orient learners to focus more on using and living English in their day-to-day life rather than just learning English. Having equipped with this qualification, one will have a linguistic foundation for ELT with hands-on experience of classroom teaching. The universities known for this programme are Northern Arizona University, The Pennsylvania State University, The University of Arizona, Kent State University, Minnesota State University, etc.

- **Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)**

With the growing importance of English, English is no more used as a foreign language rather it has become a second language for all the global citizens. This is why the term TESL has now become TESOL in many European countries including South Asia and Australia. TESOL programmes are much deeper than traditional ELT qualifications in terms of theory as well as a practicum. The universities that are known for imparting Master-level programme in TESOL are Bath Spa University UK, Lancaster University, Michigan State University, Queen's University Belfast UK, Sheffield Hallam University UK, University of Brighton UK, University Cumbria UK, University of Edinburgh UK, University of Exeter UK, University of Hull UK, University of Leeds UK (China), University of Liverpool UK, University of London UK, University of Stirling UK, University of Sunderland UK, University of Wales UK, University of York UK, etc.

- **Teaching English as an Additional Language (TEAL)**

Irrespective of the number of languages(s) one speaks, English, as part of TEAL is considered as an *additional language*. Unlike other popular ELT qualifications, TEAL is confined to very few institutions known for ELT. For instance, the University of South Wales offers a highly specialized MA in TEAL for those who want to teach English, especially to bilingual or multilingual learners. This qualification helps one gain an understanding of the issues, relating to teaching young learners with English as an additional language by using new approaches based on current practices.

- **English Language Teaching (ELT)**

This programme is an umbrella-like a master-level qualification that encompasses issues of TESOL and TEFL at length. Given its rigor in practicum, this qualification is often deemed as part of continuing professional development. Broadly speaking, this qualification helps one understand the integrity of current theories and practices in Second

Language Acquisition and English Language Teaching along with a hands-on experience of techniques and skills in ELT curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. The universities that are known for imparting this programme are, *University of East London*, *University of Southampton*, *University of Sussex*, *University of Warwick*, etc.

- **Applied Linguistics and TESOL (ALTESOL)**

Applied Linguistics in conjunction with TESOL is deemed as the most sought-after qualification in the arena of ELT profession and among ELT employers. This qualification is fine with ELT practitioners who have at least two years of ELT experience, especially at tertiary level. The universities that are known for imparting this programme are *Lancaster University*, *Columbia University*, *Durham University*, *Middlesex University UK*, *University of Leicester UK*, *University Sheffield UK*, *York St John University*.

CONCLUSIONS

Of the aforementioned six ELT qualifications, it is desirable to emphasize that potential ELT employers look for a qualification that contains a desirable amount of hands-on experience (practicum), communication, pedagogy, and adequate balance between SLA theories and practices, and in-depth knowledge of applied linguistics. Given this, the aforementioned six qualifications are the ones that cater to the exact needs of ELT employers as they are both academic and professional (teaching) qualification. Academic, in that the former is more theory-oriented and professional in that they are more teaching or practicum oriented (Jha, 2014). Having any of the stated six qualifications for today's prospective ELT practitioners will surely help them get a career-rewarding job in ELT.

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